NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

Business Plan 2008-2009

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1 Message from the Minister and the Deputy Minister

We are pleased to present the 2008-2009 Business Plan for the Department of Natural Resources. Although the province's resource sectors are facing a number of significant challenges there are also many opportunities. To be a successful resource manager, we must deal with the challenges and prepare so we are able to take advantage of the opportunities.

This year's priorities include several key multi-year initiatives that are needed to help address some of the current challenges faced by the province's resource sectors and to smooth their transition to the future. These priorities will either establish the basis for further work to be undertaken in subsequent years, or will provide information and direction necessary for the sound management of our natural resources and the administration of Crown lands.

A key priority for 2008-2009 is the launch of the department's natural resources strategy, with components that will cover forests, minerals, parks and biodiversity. The three-phase approach to developing the strategy will be just underway at the start of the year.

Our priorities support, either directly or indirectly, government's corporate path and are achievable with the budget allocation provided to the department for the upcoming fiscal year. We do want to emphasize that many other activities will be undertaken during the year as part of the department's normal ongoing operation. These activities include the operation of our provincial parks system and our wildlife park, forest protection-related work, such as fighting forest fires and dealing with infestations of insects and diseases that attack the province's forests, enforcing the natural resources related legislation that is the responsibility of the department, and delivering a range of geoscience, wildlife, forest and Crown lands related programs and services. Many Nova Scotians are already familiar with these programs and services, and either use them directly or benefit from them indirectly.

It is our responsibility and intention to provide the direction and support needed for the successful completion of the initiatives the department will be undertaking in 2008-2009. We look forward to the year ahead.

Original signed by

Honourable David M. Morse
Minister of Natural Resources

Date: April 25, 2008

Original signed by

Peter C. Underwood
Deputy Minister of Natural Resources

Date: April 25, 2008

2 Mission

The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is "to build a better future for Nova Scotians through responsible and sustainable natural resources management."

3 Link to the Corporate Path

The following table provides the linkage between each business plan priority and the government's corporate path, which is the New Nova Scotia: a Path to 2020. The corporate path provides government's overall direction and priorities and is guided by the province's economic framework (Opportunities for Sustainable Prosperity) and its social prosperity framework (Social Prosperity - Weaving the Threads: A Lasting Social Fabric).

Many of the priorities fit into the corporate path in several places. More detail is provided on each initiative later in the plan. It should also be noted that many of the department's ongoing, operational activities directly support the corporate path, especially in the "seizing new economic opportunities" and "building for individuals, families, and communities" categories. Most departmental activities relate to sustainable natural resources management. Our resources generate significant economic activity and provide valuable social, cultural, recreational and environmental benefits to residents and to visitors to the province.

For government's five annual priorities, several of the department's priorities strongly support "protecting the environment" with lesser contributions to "better roads and infrastructure" and "safer, healthier communities." The natural resources strategy development work, support for the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*, and the projects related to climate change analysis directly link to government's "protecting the environment" priority. The department's other priorities are part of broader corporate initiatives underway, are to improve client services and communications, or provide industry transition support.

The New Nova Scotia: A Path to 2020		
The Corporate Path's Direction and Priorities (Vision: Building for Families, Building for the Future)		
Creating Winning Conditions	**Seizing New Economic Opportunities**	**Building for Individual, Families, and Communities**
Globally Competitive Business Climate	**Leader in Information Technology**	**Healthy Active Nova Scotians**
Natural Resources Strategy Development Climate Change Analysis Better Regulation Initiative Mineral and Petroleum Titles Registry Modernization	Mineral and Petroleum Titles Registry Modernization	Natural Resources Strategy Development

The New Nova Scotia: A Path to 2020		
The Corporate Path's Direction and Priorities (Vision: Building for Families, Building for the Future)		
Creating Winning Conditions	**Seizing New Economic Opportunities**	**Building for Individual, Families, and Communities**
Globally Competitive Workforce	**Leader in R&D and Innovation**	**Accessible Services**
Human Resources Strategy Forest Industry Transition Support		French-language Services Act Business Continuity Management Mineral and Petroleum Titles Registry Modernization
Globally Competitive Connections	**Leader in Clean & Green Economy**	**Safe Communities**
	Forest Industry Transition Support Stewardship and Outreach Climate Change Analysis *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act* Targets Human Resources Strategy	Business Continuity Management Climate Change Analysis
		Vibrant Communities
		Natural Resources Strategy Development

4 Planning Context

The department has broad responsibilities relative to the management of Nova Scotia's forest, mineral, park and wildlife resources and the administration of the province's Crown land. Management in the context used here includes resource conservation, protection and development. In order to properly manage these resources, the department must recognize and take into account several key factors that significantly affect the province's resource sectors.

4.1 Resource Sustainability

In 1987 the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) reported that economic development often leads to a deterioration, not an improvement, in the quality of people's lives. The Commission also provided the most commonly used description of sustainable development. Sustainable development, according to this definition, is "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Managing our renewable resources and non-renewable resources in a manner that is consistent with this concept of sustainable development is critical. Our natural

resources provide significant material and non-material values to Nova Scotians. Natural resources provide a range of economic, social, cultural, recreational and environmental benefits to Nova Scotians. The province's natural resources must be managed on a sustainable basis and their values, which can change over time, must be considered and taken into account when decisions are made concerning resource uses. These decisions can have effects for decades so they need to be made based on complete and evidence-based scientific information

4.2 Public Awareness and Understanding of the Resource Sector

A lack of awareness of the extent of the province's foundation industries and how they operate is a concern. Some people believe that the forest and minerals sectors only include wood harvesting and mineral extraction. However, these sectors are much broader than that. These sectors directly support activities related to mineral exploration, forest management services, silviculture, geoscience, surveying and mapping, environmental planning, transportation of raw materials and manufactured products, and manufacturing. The resource sector needs sophisticated machinery and equipment, high technology products and computers to operate and compete globally. Skilled labour is needed to provide these services.

Although economic conditions for different resources are often cyclical, the jobs created within the various resource sectors are normally relatively highly paid and long term. Manufacturing, fabrication and assembly add value to the natural resources found in the province. Nova Scotia's mineral and forestry industries are among the province's leading industries in their application of advanced technology as companies make investments in technology to minimize costs, increase productivity and improve environmental performance.

4.3 Shifting Demographics, Public Values and Land Ownership Patterns

There are strong public expectations and numerous competing demands for the use of our limited public land and the resource base, and how it is managed. There are continuing demands to add to the provincial Crown land base by acquiring properties with specific characteristics valued by Nova Scotians. There is also a keen interest in our forests and deeply-held views about how they should be managed.

Nova Scotia is the second smallest province, in terms of land mass, and just over a quarter of this land is provincial Crown land. This is also the second lowest proportion of Crown lands of all the provinces and territories, with only Prince Edward Island having a lower proportion. On the other hand, Nova Scotia has the

second highest proportion of forested land, trailing only New Brunswick, with approximately 80 percent of the province covered by forests.

Over the last two decades the population has become increasingly concentrated in the central part of the province in Colchester, Halifax, Hants and Kings counties. In most other counties the population has either declined or has remained stable.

The vitality and success of many rural communities depends on them being able to provide their residents with economic opportunities, access to essential services, and a quality of life that will attract new people and retain those already living there. The predominantly rural nature of the resource sector makes it one of the key sectors for supporting healthy rural communities throughout the province by providing economic activity in areas of the province where alternative opportunities are not readily available.

The following questions give some idea of the difficulty in determining the actual effects of changing demographics and land ownership pattern shifts. With approximately three-quarters of the province privately owned, the type of ownership and their preferences will influence future land uses. Will land ownership become concentrated in the hands of corporations or will land be owned by many individuals in small parcels? Will land owners live in rural areas near where the land is located or will owners live in urban areas away from the land they own? Will an increasing amount of land be owned by non-residents? Will there be a difference in ownership patterns for coastal vs non-coastal properties?

Will the population of the province continue to concentrate in urban areas or will the population of rural areas eventually stabilize or even start to increase again? Will the total population of the province start to decline or will there be a drastic growth in our provincial population? Will the provincial population become increasingly concentrated in the metro Halifax area? Changes in the rural / urban split, increases or decreases in the total population and changes in the age distribution of the population may have significant effects on the values Nova Scotians place on our natural resources and on the types of programs and services the public will desire in the future.

4.4 Climate Change and Weather

This department, and the resource sectors it manages, can be profoundly affected by weather events and climatic conditions. If predicted changes in climate parameters, such as average temperatures, precipitation levels, sea level, storm frequency and

storm intensity, actually materialize there is a high likelihood that the department's operations and its budget requirements will be drastically affected.

The Fourth Assessment Report "Climate Change 2007" was released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in November 2007. An associated summary document "Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers" warns that "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal..." and that "Observational evidence .... shows that many natural systems are being affected by regional climate changes, particularly temperature increases." The summary also notes that "A wide array of adaptation options is available, but more extensive adaptation than is currently occurring is required to reduce vulnerability to climate change. There are barriers, limits and costs, which are not fully understood."

Forest fires, insect infestations, wildlife and forest health and park attendance are all influenced, both positively and negatively, by weather conditions. Warmer, drier conditions may increase the likelihood of forest fires, but may also result in more people going camping and visiting beaches. Cold, harsh winter conditions may prevent insects that could harm the forests from over-wintering, while warmer, milder conditions could allow insect populations to survive the winter. Ecosystems may also be affected, resulting in changes in wildlife habitat and native species health (both positive and negative impacts) and the possible introduction of exotic pests (non-native wildlife). More frequent and more intense storms will increase the likelihood of damage to department infrastructure, such as park facilities, trails and fire towers. These storms, plus prolonged periods of drought, may also negatively affect our forest resources due to blowdown and reduced growth rates.

4.5 Internal Operations

Since the mid-1990s there has been a deterioration in many of the assets that make up the department's infrastructure. Infrastructure includes our fleet of vehicles, helicopters, buildings, parks facilities and equipment. It is a continuing challenge to purchase replacement equipment when needed, to maintain existing equipment as required, and to develop new park and trail facilities and maintain existing parks and trails to acceptable standards.

Our staff are also critical for us to be able to deliver our programs and services. The department, like many other employers, will be experiencing a large staff turnover in the next decade as older employees retire. As a result, succession planning will be a significant challenge in the upcoming years as the department seeks to replace departing employees with new staff who possess the skills sets needed within the department in the future.

4.6 Changing Nature of the Resource Industries

Nova Scotia is part of the global economy and our resource industries cannot escape what is happening nationally and internationally. Although the resource sectors are recognized as foundation industries in "Opportunities for Prosperity, A New Economic Growth Strategy" and the importance of sustaining our natural capital is recognized in "Opportunities for Sustainable Prosperity 2006" the continued success of these important sectors is not guaranteed and changes are inevitable.

The forest industry is impacted by changes in the value of the Canadian dollar, relative to the U.S. dollar. An appreciating Canadian dollar has the effect of making Canadian exports relatively more expensive, which makes it more difficult for local companies to compete internationally. A depreciating Canadian dollar makes it easier for local companies to compete internationally. Although global demand for wood products will not likely decline, trade will be affected by transportation costs, which are themselves affected by the cost of energy. Another concern is that wood fibre can be grown cheaper and faster elsewhere. There is also increased pressure being placed on suppliers of wood products from purchasers of wood products to adopt forest certification systems. These are voluntary, market-based systems that provide end users of forest products with the assurance that the products originated from woodlands being managed on a sustainable basis.

The minerals sector is seeing an increased demand for many commodities as the world economy grows. This has resulted in higher prices for many commodities and increased returns to producers. Exploration activity has been robust in recent years but is cyclical in nature. Factors that will help the province to be an attractive location for mineral exploration and development investment include the existence of a fair and responsive regulatory regime, the availability of up-to-date geoscience information, policies that encourage exploration, and knowledgeable geoscientists.

Increases in energy costs (both electricity and petroleum products) in recent years have resulted in significantly higher costs for companies involved in the forest and minerals sectors and for companies transporting natural resources products. Increases in energy prices may also lead to increased demand for both coal and biomass for use as sources of heat and/or electricity.

The implications of technological change are unpredictable. Some changes may lead to increased demand for a particular commodity while other changes may result in a reduction in demand. We do expect, based on the degree of technological changes in the past, that the technology of the future will be a drastic improvement from what is currently available.

5 Strategic Goals

The department has identified four strategic goals that it is focusing on for the medium term which, within the context of business planning used here, can be viewed as a three to five year time frame.

The department's goals are to:

- increase awareness and understanding of sound natural resources management principles and practices;
- continuously improve departmental strategies for managing natural resources and Crown land;
- improve internal departmental planning processes and management systems; and
- improve the department's work environment and the capacity of staff to deliver departmental programs and services.

6 Core Business Areas

Core business areas are collections of individual programs whose results and outcomes are fundamental to meeting the department's strategic goals and carrying out its mandate. The department can be organized into three core business areas and all activities can be allocated to one of these core business areas. The three core business areas are:

- Natural Resources Management;
- Crown Lands Administration; and
- Infrastructure and Support Services.

Generally speaking, DNR manages natural resources on an integrated basis. This means that the relationships between resource uses and the effects of management practices of one resource on other resources is taken into account when resource management decisions are being made. The department has responsibility for aspects of the management of natural resources on both Crown land and on private land. Individual resources, such as forests, wildlife, minerals and parks, are all part of the Natural Resources Management core business area which is consistent with our integrated approach to the management of the natural resources falling in the department's areas of responsibility.

The second core business area, Crown Lands Administration, covers the department's land related activities, which are independent of the resources on the land. Activities related to acquisitions, disposals and leases are included in this core business area.

The final core business area is Infrastructure and Support Services. This core business area is mainly (but not entirely) made up of the internal activities used to support the first two core business areas, which are externally focused.

The department's website, www.gov.ns.ca/natr, provides an extensive amount of additional information on the department's programs and services.

6.1 Natural Resources Management

Natural Resources Management covers the department's broad responsibilities relative to the development, management, conservation, use and protection of forest, mineral, park and wildlife resources.

Forestry responsibilities, on both Crown and private lands, include forest management planning and research, developing and implementing strategies that support and contribute to sustainable forests, maintaining the provincial forest inventory, producing data on the province's forest resources, monitoring primary forest production and coordinating extension programs and support for industry development.

On private lands, the department leverages expenditures on silvicultural activities by providing a portion of the funding. DNR also provides technical and professional assistance and information, supports the construction of forest access roads, and monitors for compliance with regulatory requirements related to forest harvesting and forest management.

On Crown lands, the department administers the licensing of land for timber and other resource uses. Funding is provided to invest in silviculture in order to work towards forest sustainability, and a network of access roads on Crown lands is maintained. Protection-related responsibilities include the development and delivery of programs designed to protect Nova Scotia forests from fire, insects and disease, and to protect special sites, watercourses and significant wildlife habitats.

Mineral responsibilities include the implementation of policies and programs dealing with exploration, development, management and utilization of mineral resources. The department develops and implements strategies to support and promote the mineral resource sector, maintains databases of geoscientific information, tracks

mineral production, monitors compliance with regulatory requirements, administers mineral royalties and the provincial mineral rights tenure system, coordinates interdepartmental regulatory reviews of mineral development projects, operates an abandoned mine opening remediation program and provides professional assistance and advice with respect to our mineral resources and provincial geology.

Geological studies, undertaken to understand and explain the province's geology, help to document the province's mineral endowment and define the potential for new mineral resources. These programs also provide needed information to support sound public policy decisions in areas such as mineral resource development, environmental protection, land use and public health and safety.

Park responsibilities include the planning, design, development and operation of over 120 camping and day-use parks and natural area parks and park reserves, in addition to supporting facilities on Crown lands, various trails and other outdoor recreational opportunities and, through partnerships with community groups, on private lands. Parks and recreation programs and services provide quality recreational experiences to Nova Scotians and visitors to the province, while ensuring environmental, heritage and resource protection.

Wildlife responsibilities include research, development and delivery of programs, policies and legislation for the management and conservation of the province's wildlife resources and their habitats, including endangered species initiatives. Information on wildlife populations and their habitat is collected in order to obtain the scientific information required for sound decision-making. This also includes the provision of educational and viewing opportunities at the provincial wildlife park in Shubenacadie.

Enforcement responsibilities include the development, coordination and operation of a departmental resource law enforcement and compliance program, which also provides enforcement services to the former Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the protected areas program within the newly created Department of Environment and the Canadian Wildlife Service. A particular responsibility that has been added is off-highway vehicles related enforcement activities.

6.2 Crown Lands Administration

This core business area covers the department's activities related to the administration of the province's Crown lands. Crown Lands Administration encompasses the acquisition, leasing and disposal of interests in Crown lands, reconciliation and migration of Crown lands, co-ordination of government surveying

requirements, carrying out Crown lands boundary line maintenance, maintenance of provincial Crown lands records and the Crown lands Geographic Information System (GIS) cadastral database.

Nova Scotia's land mass is approximately 13 million acres, of which about 3.5 million acres are administered and controlled by DNR as provincial Crown lands (other departments like Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and the Department of Environment also administer land holdings, such as highways, land with provincial government buildings and wilderness areas). The department is also responsible for submerged lands along the approximately nine thousand kilometres of coastline in the province. Approximately 20 land-related statutes are administered by the department, as well as the provision of land-related services to other departments, such as land administration and designations for the Department of Environment, and activities undertaken in partnership with non-government conservation oriented organizations aimed at securing ecologically significant lands.

6.3 Infrastructure and Support Services

Infrastructure responsibilities include the maintenance and replacement of a fleet of hundreds of highway and other specialized vehicles (such as fire trucks, snowmobiles, gators, ATVs and tractors), as well as the operation and maintenance of a fleet of five helicopters. The road vehicles are heavily used in almost every aspect of the department's program delivery and provide a range of capabilities, from staff transportation to heavy equipment operations. Helicopter uses include forest fire detection and suppression, ground search and rescue and natural resource research and management. The DNR fleet (particularly helicopters) plays an important role in the province's emergency preparedness planning. Department facilities range from offices and depots, to pole barns, aircraft hangars, fire towers and laboratories.

Central support services[1] includes information technology, financial, communications, planning, asset management, risk management, information and records management, office administration, library services and the Office of the Minister and Deputy Minister. As the host department for the Resources Corporate Services Unit, financial and information technology services are provided to the other provincial resource departments, which are Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture,

[1] For 2008-09 funding for human resources services has been transferred to the Public Service Commission, while funding for legal services has been transferred to the Department of Justice.

Environment and Labour[2] and Energy. Several other departments (Finance and the Public Service Commission) and numerous agencies (including Treasury and Policy Board, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Communications Nova Scotia, Conserve Nova Scotia, the Emergency Management Office, the Office of the Auditor General, the Voluntary Planning Board and the Legislative House of Assembly), also receive certain support services from the Resources Corporate Services Unit. As a result, substantial expenditures reported as part of the department's budget are used to provide services and support for the programs and services of other departments and agencies.

7 Priorities and Performance Measures

For 2008-2009, the department will concentrate on several key, high-level strategic priorities that may ultimately lead to some significant changes in how the department operates during the next decade and in how the department carries out its responsibilities. Several of the priorities are multi-year in nature and span several fiscal years.

Measures are provided for each goal and are presented at the end of the section that lists the priorities for a particular goal. The measures provided are intended to measure outcomes achieved and they directly support the achievement of specific departmental goals.

The priorities presented in the following sections are in addition to the department's many ongoing activities that staff carry out on an annual basis. These ongoing activities take a substantial portion of the department's effort and resources each year.

7.1 Increase Awareness and Understanding of Sound Natural Resources Management Principles and Practices

Natural resource users need to be able to make informed decisions on natural resource use. The department is responsible for providing resource users with direction and guidance on their responsibilities and obligations as resource users in the province. Nova Scotians in general should have an understanding of what encompasses sound natural resources management. The public should be able to trust the department and have confidence that efforts are being made to carry out natural resource management in a sustainable manner, using science-based decisions.

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[2] The November 22, 2007 Throne Speech announced that a separate Ministry of Environment would be created in 2008-2009.

7.1.1 Stewardship and Outreach

The department monitors the way it communicates to both its constituents and the general public. Aspects of the communications process that are considered include: audience awareness/interest in natural resource topics, the perception of department initiatives, audience information requirements, internal communications, as well as existing communications and messaging strategies. The department's website is a key tool for distributing information to stakeholders, the general public and staff.

Planned activities for 2008-2009 include:

- carrying out a major re-design of the department's website with implementation expected late in 2008. This will involve an examination of the existing layout and structure, a review of content with updates and corrections provided as necessary, and a conversion to a standard layout. This will provide consistency between departmental pages and with the main governmental website.

- re-designing the department's internal website in order to improve its usefulness as a tool for internal communications.

Goal - Increase Awareness and Understanding of Sound Natural Resources Management Principles and Practices					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2008-09**	**Ultimate Target**	**Strategic Actions**
Effective and Efficient Service to the Public	Level of Public Satisfaction with Overall Performance of the Department (% rating performance as very good or excellent) [3]	63% (2005-06)	not applicable (no survey planned)	65% (2009-10)	Promote consistent department identity. Provide customer service and stakeholder engagement training to staff. Investigate new relationships with stakeholders

[3] The 2005-06 results were from a survey of a representative sample of 400 Nova Scotians conducted between mid-February 2006 and mid-March 2006 on behalf of DNR. This is a periodic survey that is not conducted annually. The next survey is expected during 2009-10.

Goal - Increase Awareness and Understanding of Sound Natural Resources Management Principles and Practices					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2008-09**	**Ultimate Target**	**Strategic Actions**
Public Awareness of Crown Land Management	Level of Public Awareness of Process in Place to Manage Crown Land (% that know a process is used) [4]	61% (2005-06) NA (2006-07)	not applicable (no survey planned)	65% (2009-10)	Implementation of new website for IRM. Promote LRMFs
Knowledgeable Teachers and Youth	Number of teachers, students and community group members receiving natural resources stewardship related training (thousands) [5]	10.8 (2005-06) 11.3 (2006-07)	13.3 (2008-09)	18.0 (2009-10)	Provide in-service and professional development work shops for teachers. Promote educational programs. Work with Ducks Unlimited to provide a wetlands educational experience

7.2 Continuously Improve Departmental Strategies for Managing Natural Resources and Crown Land

The department has broad responsibilities relating to the development, management, conservation and protection of the province's forest, mineral and wildlife resources, the operation of the provincial parks system and the administration of the province's Crown land. Numerous acts, regulations, strategies, policies, procedures and guidelines are in place to provide rules, processes, and guidance for the department when carrying out these responsibilities. It is a continual challenge to develop new strategies and to keep existing strategies up-to-date and relevant.

7.2.1 Natural Resources Strategy Development

On May 1, 2007, government announced that work would begin on the development of a comprehensive natural resources strategy covering forests, minerals, parks and

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[4] See previous footnote.

[5] This measure was previously reported as two separate measures and now includes training provided at both the Wildlife Park in Shubenacadie and the Natural Resources Education Centre in Middle Musquodoboit. Historical data is provided in DNR's accountability reports, which are available electronically on the DNR website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/businessplan/default.htm#account.

biodiversity. This strategy will determine the priorities and direction for government actions necessary for the management of the resources covered by the strategy and the programs, services and activities related to their management. The ultimate result will be a policy framework that supports sustainable natural resource management, the conservation of a healthy natural environment and current and new economic opportunities linked to these resources.

The natural resources strategy will be prepared using a three-phase approach, with the final strategy expected to be complete in the Spring of 2010. In the initial phase, an independent citizen committee appointed through Voluntary Planning will lead citizens and stakeholders in discussions to lay the foundation and define the values for a long-term natural resources strategy. Information gathered through public engagement will be used in Phase 2 of the development of a natural resources strategy. In this second phase, an independent panel will conduct a more detailed analysis of the Voluntary Planning project committee findings. Phase 3 will be the development of the long-term strategy itself by the Department of Natural Resources, using (among other resources) the inputs / deliverables from Phases 1 and 2.

Planned activities for 2008-2009 include:

- providing support and funding for Voluntary Planning to carry out the public consultations phase, with this phase expected to be completed by the end of 2008;

- making all necessary arrangements and preparations so that Phase 2 is ready to proceed immediately when Phase 1 is completed.

- communicating project information to department staff, other departments, stakeholders and the public.

7.2.2 *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*

The *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act* (EGSPA), passed in April 2007, commits the government to achieving 21 specific environmental and economic goals. Several goals are of particular relevance to the department. DNR will be working with the newly created Department of Environment and other departments to:

- establish a policy of preventing net loss of wetlands by 2009;

- develop a comprehensive water-resource management strategy by 2010;

- adopt strategies to ensure the sustainability of the Province's natural capital in the areas of forests, minerals, parks and biodiversity by 2010; and

- legally protect twelve per cent of the total land mass of the Province by 2015.

The development of a natural resources strategy was discussed in the previous section. Department staff are actively involved in work needed to successfully achieve the other goals listed above. Planned activities for 2008-2009 related to the attainment of government's EGSPA goals include:

- initiating a preliminary assessment of groundwater resources throughout the province, and a detailed assessment of groundwater resources for a high priority watershed / aquifer. Scientifically-based assessment and mapping of the province's aquifers is required for the development of an effective water-resource management strategy.

- undertaking a statistically valid, sample-based project to obtain an accurate figure for the area and types of wetlands in the province using satellite and air photo interpretation and mapping techniques. Knowing the amount, types and distribution of wetlands currently available is essential for successfully implementing a policy to prevent net loss of wetlands and to regularly report on its efficacy. Since the area of wetlands will be influenced by climate change, this project will also support the department's climate change analysis work by providing baseline data which can be used to detect changes.

- acquiring additional land for legal protection, in collaboration with the newly created Department of Environment and other external organizations.

7.2.3 Climate Change Analysis

Climate can be viewed as the average weather over an extended period of time for a given geographic location or region. Weather conditions are measured by parameters such as temperature (high, low and average), precipitation and wind. Climate change can be viewed as a long-term shift in the climate of a specific location.

Climate change in Nova Scotia could result in more frequent and intense storms, sea level rise, higher rates of coastal flooding and erosion, changes in minimum and maximum temperatures, changes in season lengths and differences in precipitation levels and intensity.

Planned activities for 2008-2009 include:

- participating, with the Department of Energy, on the Conference Board of Canada's Leaders' Roundtable on Climate Change Adaptation. This will provide an opportunity to interact with key private sector stakeholders to discuss potential climate change adaptation options, policies and programs.

- participating in a research project, with other partners, to investigate the feasibility of creating a bioenergy, biochemical industry in the region. This project will assess biomass resource information, technologies, policy requirements and economics.

- mapping the susceptibility of the St. Margarets Bay area to hazards such as coastal erosion, submergence and flooding. This work will identify the areas of the Bay that are at highest risk for damage by major storm events and sea level rise.

7.2.4 Forest Industry Transition Support

The forest products industry in North America has been going through significant structural changes. Almost all product segments are not operating profitably and this is not likely to change in the near future. A number of significant permanent and temporary plant closures have been announced across Canada which have reduced capacity in the industry. The shocks to the US housing and mortgage markets and the ongoing strength of the Canadian dollar relative to the US dollar has reduced the competitive position of Canadian forest products in the United States market. This continues to dampen any prospects for recovery of the industry in Canada.

To date, Nova Scotia has been fortunate, in that most of our firms have continued operating, compared to the dramatic business closure announcements in many other provinces. The industry is looking to government to respond. Other provinces and the federal governments have announced various aid packages during the last two years.

On October 12, 2007 the Province announced a new program to invest in woodlot silviculture and support a number of other forest-related initiatives so the forest industry in the province can transition to a more stable position. Funding was provided for several initiatives and a Joint Government-Industry Task Force was established to investigate other possible options that could be added to the transition program.

Planned activities for 2008-2009 include:

- providing funding of up to an additional $6 million in wood buyers' silviculture programs for small woodlots (in addition to the approximately $4 million provided in 2007-2008). The funding will be reassessed after the 2008-2009 fiscal year and future funding will be based on an index determined by market conditions.

- providing additional funding of $300,000 for the Forest Operators Assistance Program for forest road construction (a total of $900,000 over three years beginning in 2007-2008).

- providing funding for programs delivered by the Forest Safety Society (a total of $210,000 over three years beginning in 2007-2008).

- implementing any other initiatives that are identified by the Select Committee of Cabinet and the Government Industry Task Force.

On January 10, 2008 the federal government announced its intention to establish a National Community Development Trust Fund program, aimed at helping vulnerable communities and laid off workers in traditional industries such as forestry. Natural Resources will work with other departments to develop and implement Nova Scotia's participation in this program.

Goal Continuously Improve Departmental Strategies for Managing Natural Resources and Crown Land					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2008-09**	**Ultimate Target**	**Strategic Actions**
Effective Management of Resource Supply	Percentage of required value of silviculture on private and industrial lands completed [6]	127% (2005) 140% (2006)	100% (2008)	100% (2010)	Analyze wood supply requirements. Administer audit, monitoring and compliance programs. Operate the Registry of Wood Buyers

[6] This measure is calculated on a calendar year basis. Date for 2006 is reported in the department's Accountability Report for 2006-2007. Data for 2007 will be available when the 2007 Registry of Buyers Annual Report is released. Historic data is provided in DNR's accountability reports, which are available electronically on the DNR website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/businessplan/default.htm#account.

Goal Continuously Improve Departmental Strategies for Managing Natural Resources and Crown Land					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2008-09**	**Ultimate Target**	**Strategic Actions**
Species Diversity	Percentage of endangered and threatened species with recovery plans in place (as of March 31)[7]	74% (2006) 89% (2007)	100% (2009)	100% (2010)	Create Recovery Teams for listed species. Provide support and resources for the development of recovery plans
Conservation of Ecosystem Function	Percentage compliance with *Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations* under the *Forests Act*[8]	29% (2004-05) 90% (2007-08)	not applicable (no intensive survey planned)	90% (2010-11)	Promote requirements of regulations and provide educational materials. Monitor compliance with regulations

7.3 Improve Internal Departmental Planning Processes and Management Systems

Initiatives that support this goal relate to internal departmental planning and the collection of information needed to make sound decisions for effective operations, for setting future priorities, and for providing high-quality programs and services.

7.3.1 Better Regulation Initiative

The Better Regulation Initiative is a government-wide initiative that is intended to make Nova Scotia a more business-friendly location through the reduction and avoidance of red tape. Regulations are often needed to protect society, but they must be done in a way that allows businesses to operate effectively. The quality of regulation is increasingly viewed as a key factor that contributes to business success.

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7 The *Endangered Species Act* requires that recovery plans must be in place one year after listing for endangered species and two years after listing for threatened species. Historic data is provided in DNR's accountability reports, which are available electronically on the DNR website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/businessplan/default.htm#account.

8 This measure is calculated based on the results of intensive monitoring of forest harvesting sites which takes place at three-year intervals. The most recent monitoring was in 2007-08. Inspections occur each year as required.

Government has committed to a reduction in the paperwork burden for businesses, associated with meeting regulatory requirements, by 20 per cent by the year 2010, while at the same time ensuring that regulations continue to protect the public, the environment and our communities. Government has also committed to a 10-day service standard by 2010. This commitment means that departments will take no more than 10 business days to process licences, permits and other approvals. However, there are a number of legitimate exemptions to the general standard; for example: for many licences, permits and other approvals there is a need to undertake consultations or where technical reviews are necessary. In these cases, exceptions to the 10-day standard will be permitted when an alternative standard has been approved and is posted for public information. As an interim step, by 2008 the wait time associated with 50 per cent of all provincial licences, permits and approvals will be 10 business days or less.

Planned activities for 2008-2009 include:

- continuing the conversion of the Registry of Mineral and Petroleum Titles from a primarily paper-based system to an online, digital system. This project, when fully implemented, is expected to result in at least a 20% reduction in the department's business-related administrative requirements.

- undertaking other actions to further reduce business-related administrative burden and increase regulatory compliance as identified in the department's regulatory reform plan.

7.3.2 French-language Services Plan

Bill 111, the *French-language Services Act*, was proclaimed early December 2004. Regulations have also been developed and these came into effect on December 31, 2006. One requirement of the regulations is the annual development and implementation of a French-language services plan

Planned activities for 2008-2009 include:

- implementing the 2008-2009 plan to meet the requirements of the French-language Services Regulations; and

- developing the French-language services plan for 2009-2010.

7.3.3 Mineral and Petroleum Titles Registry Modernization

The Mineral and Petroleum Titles Registry manages the province's mineral tenure management systems. Functions of the Registry include granting licences and leases to mineral rights applicants, keeping records of mineral rights disposition in the province, issuing licences, leases, notifications, releases and other documents related to the province's mineral tenure system and tracking expenditures reported by mineral rights holders. A significant modernization project began in 2006-2007 with the development and issuing of a Request for Proposals for the design, development, testing, and implementation of an Automated Integrated Mineral and Petroleum Rights Registry. Department staff have worked with the successful proponent throughout 2007-2008 to build this specialized system.

Planned activities for 2008-2009 include:

- implementing Phase 1 of the project, which will provide electronic access to the Registry from the department's head office location. During this phase, users will have access to maps and records that were previously available only on paper.

- implementing Phase 2 of the project, which will provide Registry users with the ability to make Internet-based submissions (with around the clock availability of the system), eliminating the need to travel to, and make submissions at, the department's head office location.

7.3.4 Business Continuity Management

Business continuity planning is a pro-active planning process used to ensure the continued availability of essential programs and services in the event of a disruption caused by either humans or nature, and to allow a return to normal operations. A business continuity plan includes: plans, measures and arrangements to ensure the continuous delivery of critical services and products. This plan enables the organization to recover its facilities, data and assets, and to identify the necessary resources to support business continuity, including personnel, information, equipment, financial allocations, legal counsel, infrastructure protection and accommodations.

Planned activities for 2008-2009 include:

- completing and implementing a business continuity plan for the department.

7.4 Improve the Department's Work Environment and the Capacity of Staff to Deliver Programs and Services

Our staff are critical for delivering the public services provided by this department. Given the large number of staff who are eligible to retire in the next five years, the department must take steps to ensure that we are able to maintain a complement of dedicated public servants with the knowledge and skill sets needed to allow the department to continue to meet our mandate. A separate section (Section 8) is provided in the business plan to describe the human resources related initiatives that will be undertaken in 2008-2009. To maintain consistency with the previous departmental goals, the performance measures for the goal of improving the department's work environment and the capacity of staff to deliver programs and services will be reported in this section.

Goal **Improve the Department's Work Environment and the Capacity of Staff to Deliver Programs and Services**					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2008-09**	**Ultimate Target**	**Strategic Actions**
Safe Staff and Workplaces	Percent of employees who somewhat agree or strongly agree that the department creates a safe work environment [9]	78% (2004) 89% (2007)	89% (2009)	89% (2011)	Work to improve in the areas identified in the 2006 audit as needing further attention.
Knowledgeable Staff	Percent of employees who somewhat agree or strongly agree that they have access to training opportunities [10]	74% (2004) 86% (2007)	86% (2009)	86% (2011)	Complete training and staffing plans for each branch.

[9] All permanent civil servants were included in an employee survey conducted by the Public Service Commission in February 2004. Another complete survey was undertaken in March 2007. The ultimate target is being set for 2011 (complete surveys will be conducted in 2009 and 2011).

[10] See previous footnote.

8 Human Resources Strategy

In response to the survey of staff within government that took place in 2004, as well as to support the Nova Scotia Corporate Human Resources Plan, a Human Resources Framework was prepared for use in the department (and the other Resources Corporate Services Unit departments and client groups). This was a comprehensive framework that plays a vital role in the achievement of the department's overall strategic goals and objectives. The framework is divided into three sections: recruitment and retention, training and development, and occupational health and safety.

Three work teams have been created in the department to develop and help implement various human resources related initiatives in the areas of recruitment and hiring, rewards and recognition, and career and succession management. Senior management representatives have been appointed as champions to lead each work team.

Planned activities for 2008-2009 include:

- completing a staff training plan and a five-year departmental staffing plan;
- delivering training to staff and managers on recruitment and retention;
- delivering an updated orientation program for department staff;
- developing a professional development strategy covering all branches of the department;
- developing training and development programs and workshops in anticipation of the new natural resources strategy, which will require updated policies, programs and practices.
- raising awareness within the department of the importance of staff responding to the employee survey expected for early in 2009. The response rate for DNR must be increased to provide a sufficiently large sample for more accurate data analysis.

In December 2007, amendments to the *Civil Service Collective Bargaining Act* were made which impacted many of the department's staff who work as casual and seasonal employees. The amendments changed the length of time these workers were required to work before they could be appointed to civil service bargaining unit positions. Effective February 1, 2008, casual or seasonal employees who had been working continuously for more than 10 weeks, or who had worked in the same department for more than a total of 10 weeks in a 52-week period, were eligible to become members of the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union

(NSGEU), to receive the bargaining unit rate of pay for the jobs they were in, and to apply for civil service bargaining unit positions as internal candidates. The benefits that will be available to these casual and seasonal employees once they are members of the bargaining unit have already been negotiated between the employer and the NSGEU and depend on the length of time an individual has worked.

This is a significant change in the way that the department operates since casual and seasonal staff are essential in how the department delivers several programs and services, such as the operation of the provincial parks system and the delivery of forest fire fighting services. This is also an opportunity to improve the working conditions of these employees.

During 2008-2009 planned activities related to this change will include:

- implementing the new requirements within the department; and
- reviewing the budgetary, human resources and operational implications from the new rules.

9 Budget Context

The following table provides budget information for the department for 2007-2008 and for 2008-2009.

The department's budget in 2008-2009 is $84.6 million, a $5.4 million increase from the 2007-2008 budget. Major factors that have contributed to the change are:

- increased salaries due to a contract settlement with the NSGEU (permanent staff and casual staff);
- a transfer of funding for human resources services to the Public Services Commission;
- a transfer of legal services funding to the Department of Justice; and
- funding provided for forestry transition (Crown land and private land silviculture and Forest Safety Society funding).

The tangible capital asset (TCA) allocation for 2008-2009 increased to $3.5 million. This funding will be used for land acquisitions, infrastructure improvements in the provincial parks system and for replacement vehicles for the department's fleet.

Department of Natural Resources - Budget Context			
	2007-2008 Estimate	**2007-2008 Forecast**	**2008-2009 Estimate**
Program and Service Area	**$ Thousands**	**$ Thousands**	**$ Thousands**
Gross Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	654	654	479
Corporate Services Unit [11]	7,641	7,579	6,933
Renewable Resources	11,791	15,211	11,866
Mineral Resources	3,496	3,470	3,691
Regional Services	48,184	52,777	53,975
Planning Secretariat	4,457	4,358	4,552
Land Services	3,019	2,908	3,142
Total Departmental Expenses	79,242	86,957	84,638
TCA Purchase Requirements	1,000	8,277	3,500
Provincially Funded Staff (# of FTE)	881	839	864

[11] The Corporate Services Unit figures include the cost of financial, human resources and information technology services provided to a number of other departments and agencies. Figures for 2007-08 include human resources. For 2008-09, the budget for human resources is included with the Public Service Commission.